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ABSTRACT

Professional training for translators, most often begun in specialized subject areas, should begin with a course in translation theory. The first purpose of such a course is to teach students to think as translators, whose function is to convey the message contained in the source language. Simply stated, this is a three-step process of: (1) isolation of semantic meaning (interpretation); (2) conversion of that semantic meaning back into a linguistic form in the target language (re-expression); and (3) refinement or specification (collation). Secondly, the student must develop a thorough understanding of how languages work in relation to one another (general linguistics). Finally, the practitioner must learn the relative independence of form and meaning in language, and then the need to know the situation of the text as well as its context. The student should learn to further distinguish meaning, which is linguistic, from sense, which is extra-linguistic, and to understand the elements of situation in a text: intention; motive; cultural background; social, educational, and professional level; linguistic competence; linguistic style; personalities of author and intended audience, etc. While the foremost task of translating is a linguistic one, the broader objective is textual equivalence. Contains 28 references. (MSE)

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Sergio Viaggio

THE FIRST THING TO TEACH (WHICH IS OFTEN NEVER TAUGHT)*/

"The struggle against words is a futile struggle."
Carlos Drummond de Andrade

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INTRODUCTION

Let us imagine the following scene: The instructor is standing by the edge of the pool with his pupil. "Now I'll teach you how to swim," says he. "Here is the pool, this is the water; you jump into it and try to get to the other side, and I'll tell you where you went wrong." Not much for method or didactics, right? Yet this is, *mutatis mutandis*, exactly the way many institutions purporting to train translators and interpreters go about their task: "Here's a text, listen to this tape; you do it and we'll tell you where you went wrong."

It is like teaching the numbers by starting with equations. Why is it that so few seem to have thought of teaching translation (written or oral, simultaneous or consecutive) like any other discipline: with a method that would climb up from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, isolating problems and variables one at a time, and then combining them into progressively more intricate structures. Of course, in times long past, people were taught and learned how to read with a Bible. Apparently, it can be done. One could, I presume, learn the piano with Liszt's B minor sonata for one's only score, but why bother? In other words, what is required at the very beginning is a system of specifically chosen texts whose purpose it is to be translated or interpreted, the way musical exercises are meant not for performance but for practice.

Naturally, in order to be able to translate properly '**estaba**' and '**estuvo**' --and even more so in order to explain how to do it-- a translator must know what the difference is, and where it is relevant and where it is not; in which cases he is dealing with a motivated choice and when there has been none. He has to know his source language very well, indeed much better than its average native speaker (even if he is not one), because the native speaker need not be aware of why he is choosing what, or that he is making a choice at all. This, however, is only half the problem: The translator must be above all a master of the target language, which should ideally be his own.

Just pause for a second on the word "master", which I chose deliberately. When we want to improve our knowledge and command of a language, we select as models the great writers; and who do we have --or should have-- next to the great authors but the great translators (and they are often the very authors themselves), whose job has been to fence while handcuffed... and prevail? A Spanish translator should be able to tell, for instance, the semantic and stylistic difference between '**lo saben hombres y mujeres**' and '**lo saben los hombres y las mujeres**', and between them and their

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inversions: **'hombres y mujeres lo saben'** and **'los hombres y las mujeres lo saben'**. He must know it to be able to translate it, and be able to explain it if he wishes to teach it. Needless to point out, one can be blissfully ignorant of such things and still be a translator. As a matter of fact, there are very good translators --and authors-- who have little if any theoretical knowledge, or who are hardly aware of the problems they often brilliantly solve; but I doubt they could make good teachers.

What I submit, therefore, is that, besides and before having our specifically chosen texts, didacticians ought to have a solid theoretical and practical knowledge of both SL and TL. Extremely important as well is a sound knowledge of linguistics and, yes, poetics. If theory without practice is stale and boring, practice without theory can be dangerous indeed. Many a blessed soul believes himself to be a translator, professes to be an interpreter, or dares teach others, without having much qualification. It is not enough being able to drive through traffic every day to the office and back in order to race at Le Mans... or to qualify as a cabby. Driving offers an apt simile. Most people can drive very well indeed... for amateurs; that's the way they often know languages: very well indeed... for amateurs. But we, besides, as true linguistic race- and taxi-drivers, must also be good mechanics and thoroughly know every piece and what it does and how it works, and what happens when it breaks, and how to fix it or do without it... Are we?

As far as I know, most of us --good and bad alike-- have had to learn the hard way, with the Bible and Liszt's score as it were. But the profession has come of age; it is time, then, for its didactics to come of age too. For all practical purposes, and with honourable if still relatively few exceptions, there are as many ways of teaching translation --including interpretation-- as people who teach, and very few among them have any method to speak of. More often than not, empiricism reigns supreme and unchallenged. A glaring need exists for a theoretical shore-up, for a scientific approach to translation --and interpretation-- as a discipline to be "learnt" and therefore "taught" as such. Every institution claiming to train translators and interpreters must give their students, on the one hand, a solid theoretical basis: morphology and syntax, lexicology and stylistics of both SL and TL; comparative linguistics, semantics and philology; text linguistics and literary analysis; and, on the other, a practice based upon the theory, a practice <u>of</u> the theory, keeping always in mind that it is practitioners they are training.

An adequate and separate Introduction to Translation is, then, a most essential prerequisite. The case is often altogether different: students are offered Legal Translation, Technical Translation, Political Translation... and what little theory there is seeps through a bit here and another bit there; as if in medical school students were taught Gastroenterology and Epidemiology but

not Anatomy, with the organs mentioned and explained as they come up in connection with such or such other disease, and no notion of the human organism ever given or instilled. Some of my students have been puzzled by the fact that I seem to view translation as an exact science: alas, not exact, but most definitely a science... and a craft, combining 'knowing what' with 'knowing how', more or less like medicine - and certainly not that much less. Needless to say, it can also be an art.

Whenever I have had to teach --to absolute novices, or **stagiaires**, or full-fledged veterans; in Havana, New York or Buenos Aires, at the U.N., ESTI or CUNY-- I've had to start from square one; because none of my students has ever been there. None of their teachers seems to have noticed that also in translation and interpretation there actually is a square one. For whatever it is worth, then, may I share with you what I have been doing when faced with the task of teaching novices to translate.

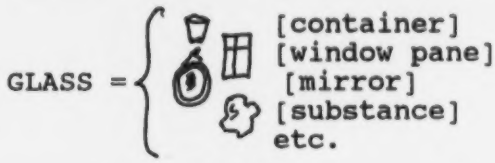
* * *

WHAT IS TO TRANSLATE?

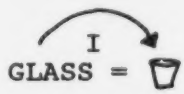
First and foremost, the purpose of a course in translation must be to teach the students to <u>think</u> as translators. And the first thing a translator ought to ask himself is the basic question: What is "to translate"? In my experience, students come up with many different answers, but soon realise that it is, after all, simpler than they had feared - simpler, not easier, mind you: to translate, I lead them into answering, is to convey the "message" carried in the SL; the "message" being the lexically coded "extra-linguistic" or "objective" reality, or whatever it is that words stand for. I provisionally choose this working definition because it helps us begin our work. With it, the text becomes a mere guide to "meaning"; it gets de-mystified with a vengeance.

Next, I castigate my students with a pet example. Let us suppose the text is 'Glass'. How do we translate it into Spanish? "It depends," quoth they with a cunning smile. "On what?" ask I. "On the context!" they exult. Fine. They want a context? I give them one: 'Glass is a common noun'. The context, I show them, is not magic. We still are at a loss, although, of course, far from a complete loss. There are several possible translations, but not that many. The choice would be limited to the way we <u>read</u> the text, the way we <u>decode</u> or <u>interpret</u> it. Let us analyse the different meanings this text may have. (And we are not translating yet, just trying to understand, the way we try to understand any text we read, regardless of why or with what purpose we read it. Which is essential if we want to translate.) We must, in principle, be able to trace back the semantic content of our text, what it <u>means</u>. I point out that it is not for lack of linguistic knowledge that we are stuck: no dictionary on earth will bail us

out. We know all the possible meanings of 'glass', but we cannot determine which one is relevant in this particular text. If there were in Spanish a word with a similar array of meanings, we could safely use it and come up with a translation as ambiguous or polysemic or rich or vague as the original. But Spanish is lacking in it; it forces us to make a choice. These students have to start realising that what makes translation devilishly difficult and heavenly fascinating is that it constantly faces the translator with the need to become aware that he has to choose, and then choose right. What are the choices in this example? Our inquiry would yield a varied but finite list of possibilities:

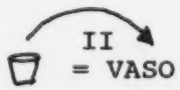


Let us assume that, thanks to the context or to our knowledge of what it is all about, we can establish that



This is the first and fundamental step of a three-phase process. It consists of the sheer <u>understanding</u> of the text, its correct reading; the passage from the words to what lies behind them, what the Paris school calls 'deverbalisation' (a concept much maligned by Newmark and Wills). I call it INTERPRETATION. What we cannot understand we are unable to translate, what we have misunderstood we are bound to translate wrong. We can make mistakes other than these, but for these not even bad interpreters are forgiven.

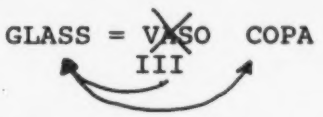
The second step will take us from the semantic meaning thus isolated back to a linguistic form, only this time in the TL:



We say '**vaso**' because the original signifies ' ', and not because it says 'glass'. This is of exceptional methodological significance, since the SL ceases to play any role. We have forgotten about 'glass', all we care about is ''. There has been no contact whatsoever between original text and translation, SL and TL (that --and nothing more transcendental-- is what I mean by deverbalisation). Why is it so important? Because once forgotten, unused, unseen and unheard, the SL cannot saddle us with its forms. We will have therefore <u>re-expressed</u> an extra-linguistic "meaning". We will have said it in our own words, which we have chosen

because, to the best of our knowledge of the TL and the matter at hand, they are the most adequate to express the meaning, a meaning that is external to and independent from both SL and TL. That meaning is given unto us, it is mandatory; but the form is ours, we select it among those offered by the TL, which may or may not be analogous to those the SL offered the author. This second step I have named RE-EXPRESSION.

Now, and only now, will our two languages make contact: on the way back. Sticking always to my pet example, imagine the whole text read: '"The Queen!" said the Marquis lifting his glass.' Quite obviously, the Marquis was not drinking from a regular glass but from a stemmed glass. It would have been not only unnecessary but awkward to specify in English. In Spanish, on the other hand, it is awkward <u>not</u> to specify; and we consequently correct our translation:



This third and last step I refer to as COLLATION (and in Spanish **CONFRONTACION**).

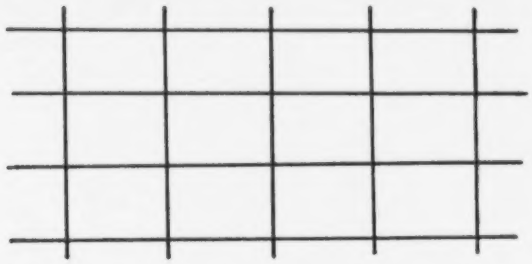
Together, INTERPRETATION, RE-EXPRESSION and COLLATION are basically what translating is all about; and no matter how difficult or complex a text may be, from a newspaper heading to a classical tragedy, the <u>method</u> remains the same, if less easily applied. We shall now proceed to take a closer look at language.

1) HOW LANGUAGES WORK

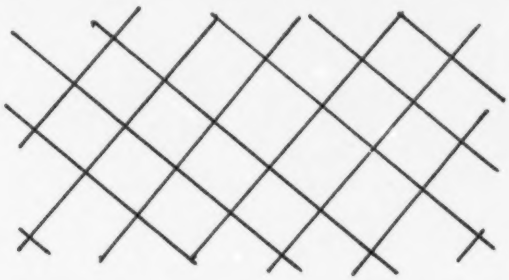
Peter Newmark has a point when he says that, after all, all we have on the page is words. Exactly the same way all Sherlock Holmes has at the scene of the crime are footsteps, ashes, a scrap of paper, and a window that has been forced not from the outside but from the inside. Words are the translator's immediate clues; he must learn thoroughly to understand how they work. What I proceed to next, then, is to an elementary introduction to general linguistics.

The extra-linguistic world, objective or subjective, emotional or notional, may suggest or favour certain particular ways of analysing it, but does not possess inherent categories: it is man who establishes them, and they become crystallised in language. Language, paradoxically a creation of man, is inherited by him ready-made, as it were; man can and does indeed change language, but for all practical purposes, language as the individual knows it remains the same, and every language chooses what to signify to what extent and in what combinations, and they don't go about it the same way (nor do any of them keep doing it the same way in all places or at all times).

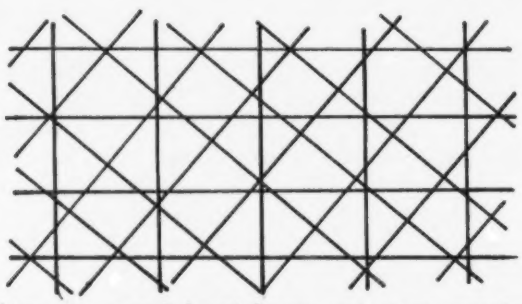
The analogy I suggest is that of a planisphere. The extra-linguistic reality appears as an aereal picture where valleys turn into mountains and land into water but it is impossible to tell exactly at what point, and in which it is difficult to identify any specific spot. Language comes as the cartographer, to name and classify, and, more specifically, to impose upon this map a more or less coherent but ultimately arbitrary set of coordinates and give a "denomination" to each "parcel" of the surface thus divided. English, for instance, takes the area of "number" and divides it into two great spaces: singular and plural; Sanskrit distinguishes in it three zones: singular, dual and plural. What happens is that while language A imposes on the map this set of coordinates:



language B, as validly and arbitrarily, lays upon it this other one:



and the same semantic "spot" is defined (i.e. signified) in a different way by each different language. The superimposition of both nets shows an oft forgotten couple of truisms:



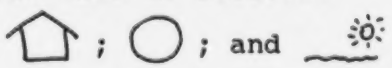
a) No two units or combinations of any number of units in any given language or any two different languages ever <u>fully</u> correspond to each other (although their <u>basic</u> or <u>relevant</u> content quite often does).

b) Every single time we translate any text of any length or depth we are simultaneously saying something more, something less, and something different, no matter how precise we think we are.

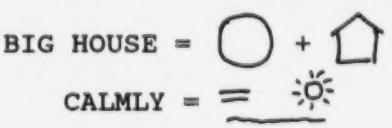
Total translation is thus by definition impossible; but, at the same time, the full extent of the semantic area covered in any given text is never ever relevant, and one can almost always salvage all of the relevant information, which makes practical translation eminently attainable. The corollary is obvious: the more "meaningful" the form, which is unique for each language, the more difficult the translation; the translation of poetry being, then, the most difficult of all, the only often truly impossible one. The first step has now become clear: how to look for that which is relevant. The emphasis --and I am emphatic about it-- should be made on the searching rather than the finding, since searching requires a method and that is what a teacher should be there to teach: translating rather than translation.

2) HOW LANGUAGES MEAN

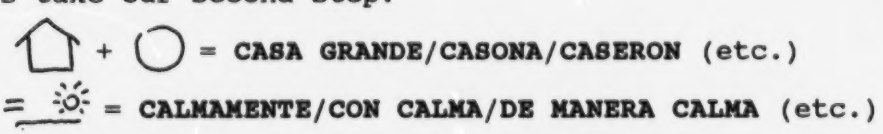
Let us take a look at a couple of examples: 'calmly', 'big house'. In both cases we can distinguish two "meaningful" components constituting respectively a derived word and a phrase. Their "value", the "way" each of these four components mean, is not the same. 'House', 'big' and 'calm-' are, in that order, easy to 'picture'; we could draw them as follows:



What about '-ly'? A paraphrase of '-ly' would be 'in the manner of', we can symbolise it as ' '. Our texts would become



Now let us take our second step:



The way the "units of meaning" --and we can start calling them SEMES-- are combined and expressed in the SL does not necessarily dictate an analogous form in the TL, even if such analogous form does exist. It seldom does, though, and when it exists it is often unadvisable. The Spanish adverb '**calmamente**' has two awkward **m**'s and an extra nasal to boot, and it will rhyme with one out of every ten words in the paragraph. English, for its part, has no augmentative morphemes, whereas Spanish teems with them; not using them because they do not appear in the original is a poor alibi, the original will never say what the SL is inherently unable to

express. The author did not choose to use a phrase rather than a complex word (a definition instead of a nomination, to use the right terms): he had no choice. The translator does and has to make it: writing '**casona**' requires as much choosing as to write '**casa grande**' (or, by the way, '**gran casa**'), but rest assured that the only way of coming up with anything but '**casa grande**' is by forgetting about 'big' and about 'house' and retaining only ' ' + ' '. Of course, '**casa grande**', '**casona**' and '**caserón**' do not mean exactly the same thing (as we took pains to make clear, no two units or combinations thereof ever do); but a translator will decide which --if any-- of them to use, based upon considerations other than 'big' and 'house'.

We have now come to a crucial notion: that of LEVEL or STRATUM. We shall distinguish the morphemic, lexemic and syntactic levels, and we must also expand on the concept of SEME. The seme finds expression at different levels in different languages, and, often, at different levels within the same language. Thus the seme ' = ' ('-ly') can be expressed in Spanish via a derivational morpheme: '**-mente**'; an independent or autonomous morpheme (i.e. a word, or, more precisely, a LEXEME): '**con**'; or a syntagm: '**a la**', '**de manera**', '**como si**'. And, as pointed out, even when SL and TL offer more or less similar choices, they are not equally advisable or apt in both.

Special attention ought to be drawn to a very widespread phenomenon. Precisely because the fledgling translator is remiss to let go of the original and stick to its meaning, he will quit a level only when unable to stay in it, and then always to go up, never down. And so, if the original says 'homeless', our suspect is forced to forsake the morphemic level and climb up to the lexemic: '**sin hogar**' (or, much, much better: '**sin techo**'). He won't be that quick, though, to climb down from 'malicious intent' to '**alevosía**'. Why? Because he will cling at all times to the level in the original and will not let go unless literally forced to, seldom when allowed, and never to go downward. That, and no other, is the reason why translations tend to be longer than the original. The translator takes all the long ways the SL forces him to take, but none of the shortcuts his TL allows him to take, since that demands assuming the responsibility of choosing; and fie the heretic who dares! (Naturally, in order not to take the shortcut, it is also necessary to choose, but since one does not have to meditate, it deosn't become apparent.) When was the last time you saw the distributive adjective '**sendos**' in a Spanish translation, any translation from any language? If the English goes 'ten policemen armed with as many shotguns', you can bet the Spanish will duly go '**diez policías armados de otras tantas escopetas**', instead of '**sendas escopetas**', which is shorter and better. If the original don't say it, the translator don't say it neither! Of course, the distributive (as far as I am aware) exists only in Spanish; there is just no way it will be suggested by the original text.

This, in turn, will bring in the concept of COMPENSATION. We always get the feeling that the TL is so less flexible, so much poorer than the SL... and so it is. Whenever we write, we take advantage of our language, we use it the way it is best. That will almost never be the best way in another language. We have to know and be aware of what our TL is best at, and use its advantages over the SL to compensate for its handicaps. So you cannot 'elbow your way through a crowd' as graphically or laconically in Spanish? What about '**ser alto**' and '**estar alto**' in English? What we must keep ever present is that the SL will always show off its own advantages, rubbing them in as it were, while never evidencing its disadvantages; and, most definitely, never pointing to the advantages of our TL, since these are offered exclusively to its users.

3) PLANE OF EXPRESSION AND PLANE OF CONTENT

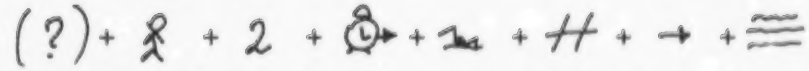
The ground is now laid to examine more rigorously a fact whose enormous relevance cannot be stressed enough: that of the relative independence of form from meaning and the relative autonomy of meaning with respect to form as evidenced in the existence of two separate orders, the PLANE OF EXPRESSION and the PLANE OF CONTENT. Developing Saussure's concept, Hjelmslev introduces the notion of FIGURES of both expression and content, i.e. the respective minimal elements in each plane lacking counterpart in the other. In a text such as 'you would have talked' we can distinguish four lexemes and, in the case of the lexeme 'talked', two smaller units 'talk' and '-ed', called MORPHEMES (never mind, for our purposes, that the other lexemes in our example are in turn simple morphemes). This is as far as we can analyse without leaving meaning behind. The other units, syllables and phonemes/graphemes, will have no meaning of their own, unless they happen to coincide with a morpheme, which in turn can be a lexeme, which in its turn can function as a complete sentence, as in 'Stop!'. So far, so good, we all know it, so what else is new. What may be new, particularly to a novice and at least as a conscious fact, is that the same applies to the units of meaning.

'He' means [third person], [singular], [masculine], [animated]; but what part of 'he' stands for [third person], or [singular], or [masculine], or [animated]? In language, the minimal units of either level lack their specific counterparts. Phonemes do not necessarily mean anything and they very seldom do; semes do not necessarily have their own specific form and they almost never find it. And the way morphemes, as the minimal units of expression having their own meaning, may consist of more than one phoneme/grapheme; so can they, as the minimal units of meaning having their own form, be made up of more than one seme. And exactly the same way a phoneme/grapheme may show up constituting different morphemes, a seme can travel from one morpheme to another. If /a/ is /a/ in 'at' and 'bad', then [plural] is [plural] in 'cats', 'many' and 'clan', and [past] is [past] in

'ago', 'talked' and 'yesterday'. Both /a/ and [past] are respectively there, neither is there alone: both need the presence of other minimal units of their respective planes in order to constitute a unit with both meaning and form.

What ultimately counts for us is the SEMIC EQUATION, it is it we are basically after: the ' ', the ' ' + ' ', the ' '; constantly aware that there are more semes than meet the eye and the mind, ever conscious that they are not always relevant. We can assume semes to be, if not universal (though I, for one, believe they are), at least common to both SL and TL. Linguistically, they are the translator's basic unit, the trouble being, as we have seen, that normally languages do not signify them in the same manner. Sometimes a seme becomes formalised only in the SL: 'to elbow one's way' gives vent to, among others, [process] + [open] + [passage] + [agent] + [instrument] + [elbow] (of course, I could have used more complex mathematical signs, but you get my point, I hope). The same equation can be rendered in Spanish as '**abrirse paso a codazos**'. Notice that [open] and [instrument] are formalised in Spanish but not in English. English is, in this case, more suggestive than Spanish: it signifies more and says less; it is its penchant and our (translators') nemesis, especially if we are not aware that sometimes English cannot <u>but</u> signify where Spanish can only imply. Take, for instance, this example partially borrowed from Mounin: 'if you will swim across the river'.

This clause has more possible readings than one would readily perceive, among others, [imperative] and [entreaty]; let us assume we know 'if' to be merely [conditional], 'will' to be just [future], and 'you'... well that's a tough one. Observe that in modern English the semic content [second person] is normally formalised on its own, without indication of [number], [sex] or [subjective attitude by the first person]. The semes specifying [number] and [sex] do normally materialise close by in other elements, usually nouns; as in 'you good people' and 'you are beautiful women'. This does not make 'you' [plural] in the first case any more than it turns it into [feminine singular] in the second. 'People' and 'women' are [plural], and only 'women' [feminine], not 'you'. Anyhow, in the case of [plural] and [sex], ([gender] is not semantic, and therefore of no use to us), we are likely to find help nearby in the text, although we do not in this particular instance. What about [subjective attitude by the first person]? In English it is not grammatically relevant ('ye' and 'thou' are relics); 'you' will apply to The Queen of England and to one's poker pals. But Spanish minds it very much; it forces us to choose. What: '**tú**', '**usted**', '**vos**', '**vosotros**', '**ustedes**'? Our text doesn't give us the slightest hint; in order to translate we have to burn our ships. Enough! We hereby decide that in this case the [second person] shall be [singular] and the [subjective attitude by the first person] that of [intimacy]. Our basic graphic equation would then be:



and our possible --among several-- Spanish equivalents: **'si has de cruzar el río a nado'**.

In English you can combine (amalgamate, rather) both [process] and [mode of action] in the verb, and that is what one normally does: one 'walks', or 'swims', or 'flies', or 'drives', or 'sails', or 'runs', or 'dashes', or 'plods' across a river. In Spanish one amalgamates [person], [number] and [tense], but not [mode of action]; [mode of action] is not brought in unless it is relevant, whereas in English it will show up even if it is not. The context will probably tell us whether **'a nado'** is as redundant and awkward as **'tú'** and **'en el futuro'** would normally be. And thank heavens for redundancy and irrelevance: translation, nay, communication would be well nigh impossible without them!

Let us take stock of the linguistic concepts visited so far: SEME, MORPHEME, LEXEME, SYNTAGM and LEVEL. We have also talked about MEANING and FORM. We have introduced the notions of PLANE OF EXPRESSION and PLANE OF CONTENT. We have used without mentioning them the Saussurean theory of SIGN, Hjelmslev's theory of FORM and SUBSTANCE, and that of the DOUBLE ARTICULATION OF LANGUAGE advanced by Martinet. We could now foray into the existence of SEMANTIC FIELDS, and the notions of VALUE and SIGNIFICANCE with which Saussure expands and refines the concept of MEANING. After this brief and basic introduction to the workings of language (it takes me normally but one hour), the concepts are in place to revise and upgrade our theory, and proceed at last to tackle the task of translating.

* * *

4) CONTEXT AND SITUATION

Let us go back to our initial example. Students, you may recall, were warned that the definition reached as a consequence of applying the model was a "working" definition meant to help them work. The moment has come to introduce to them the distinction between **LANGUE** and **PAROLE**, and make absolutely clear that texts --all texts-- are facts of **la parole**, accessible through **la langue**, but much wider and deeper and more complex than the mere materialisations of a virtual code.

Initially we were dealing with "meaning" and its manifestation in different languages. The crucial notion of SEME had been arrived at and used as a means of establishing the total "meaning" of a given word or syntagm or phrase. We explained how languages differ not only in what they are capable of "saying" but also, and much more importantly, in what they are unable not to "say" (**'tú'**, **'usted'**, **'vosotros'**, **'ustedes'** versus 'you', etc.). We spoke --provisionally-- of meaning as "the extra-linguistic reality or

whatever it is that words stand for". All that is fine indeed, but --alas-- not quite true. Meaning is not extra-linguistic: it is linguistic to the hilt, pretty much as form is; there's no sign without **signifiant** or **signifié**. Thus, as Catford rightly points out, an English text will have an English meaning and a Spanish text - a Spanish meaning.1/ Meaning, being language-specific, is therefore untransferable. What is in fact extra-linguistic and very much transferable indeed is SENSE.2/

Let us take a second, closer look at what took place in class one. Is it really true that 'glass' has among its dictionary-itemised, English-specific meanings, together with [substance] and [mirror], those of [stemmed container] and [non-stemmed container]? Obviously not, otherwise 'man' has, among its meanings [Sergio Viaggio] or [that-guy-over-there- in-the-brown-suit]. The [container] meaning of 'glass' can be applied to different objects and classes of objects, regardless of their being stemmed or not. What will determine whether it applies to this or that container is the SITUATION.3/ No wonder the context 'glass is a common noun' didn't help: it provided no clue to the situation; it was a mere linguistic cushion, not a specifier. (Dictionaries' main shortcoming is, precisely, that they do not provide situations, just lists of meanings.) And that's why '**vaso**' doesn't fit in "'The Queen!'...": it clashes with the situation - insomuch as this latter context does indeed provide a situation.

5) MEANING, SENSE AND LINGUISTIC FRAMING

It is not, therefore, that 'glass' linguistically **means** [stemmed container], it is the situation that makes the class of extra-linguistic, material object clear. The meaning has not in fact changed, but the SENSE most definitely has. It so happens that Spanish has a meaning for that sense; therefore the linguistic FRAMING 4/ of the situation in Spanish, the way the Spanish language selects which features of a given situation are to be explicitly incorporated in its description, requires its presence. We explained that, while it would have been awkward to specify the kind of container in English, it would have been equally inept **not** to do so in Spanish. It may --and should-- be argued that that is not always so: we can conceive of a situation in which specification in English (for instance, the Marquis had both a regular glass **and** a stemmed glass before him) may be justified and even advisable; and we can also think of a situation where the Marquis may very well have toasted from a '**vaso**' (a last toast at La Bastille before the gallows, perhaps); but they could not possibly be the **same** situations!

Are we not, the students will ask, being too subtle and pedantic with our lingo? After all, what real difference is there between meaning and sense? Are we really coming up with such a helpful insight when we say 'glass' doesn't have the meaning but can have the sense, whereas '**copa**' has both? Indeed we are!

Again, the newly introduced concept of situation will make it crystal-clear. Let's suppose I owe you $1,000 and can't pay you back; I ask you 'Do you mind if I keep the money?' and you answer, your eyes sparkling with fury, 'Not a bit! I feed on leaves!' Our students can look up every word in a thousand dictionaries, but there's no way the "meanings" will add up to 'You bet I mind, you bloody idiot!': that is sense; extra-linguistic, often even extra-linguistically conveyed, such as through a furious glare or a well-placed punch in the nose. In our example, the meaning has been opposite to the sense. Let us further imagine that I get home and my wife asks me 'Well, what did he say?' and I answer 'Oh, he said he didn't mind at all; he feeds on leaves.' What if this dialogue took place in Spanish, and I was not just reporting but translating?5/ Could this be said to have been an accurate translation? Of course not. Because, though made up of the same meaning, it makes the wrong sense. And how do we know --and we do undoubtedly know-- that the SENSE is wrong? In this specific case because of the intonation, which even unaided by gestures and facial expression can be said to convey **all** the sense; so much so, that a witness who didn't understand the words would have had no trouble in getting the message (minus the irony). This intonation would be not only absent, but **changed** in the report; conviction substituting for disbelief, the situation ends up radically altered, and sense together with it. The alternative to reporting 'He raised hell' would be mimicking the sender's expression.

6) FORMANTS

Of course, SITUATION is a rather complex concept. The more easily grasped sense is that of the actual set-up, the "scene" where communication takes place or evoked by it (the gruesome Bastille dungeons we conjured up above, for instance). But as employed here, on the basis of Neubert, Lvovskaja and Schweizer, the situation goes far beyond the mere moment and place the text refers to or in which it is produced; it encompasses, among other elements, or FORMANTS 6/, the intention; the motive; the cultural background; the social, educational and professional level; and the linguistic competence and style as well as the personality of both the author and his intended or unintended audience; the relationship of the text to other texts of the same type; the specific task the text is meant to perform (express, convince, entreat, dissuade, shock...); the means, linguistic or other, consciously or unconsciously selected for that purpose; the reaction --expected or not-- from its audience past and/or present; etc. We can picture the situation as a series of concentric circles reaching further out or deeper away from the text, each of them a progressively higher instance to which the translator must resort for answers and orientation. And that is only the SL situation. In the case of translation we have what Neubert calls "displaced situationality": the original text reaches and is understood by the TL audience via a mediator and a mediating process themselves embedded in a specific situation.7/

SO WHAT, THEN, IS TO TRANSLATE?

It follows, then, that if sense and situation are extra-linguistic, if they can therefore be framed non-linguistically, if a language is incapable of framing certain features or unable to leave specific features un-framed, then translation is not just saying "the same thing" in another language. The linguistic framing of a message is only part of the overall frame of communication, which need not be linguistic at all.8/ Let us try a few cases. In my classes I have used a U.N. brochure on the basics of the Organisation. On page one there was an introduction by the Secretary-General the title of which read 'A Word of Welcome'. This title should be translated '**Palabras de bienvenida**'. Why '**palabras**' instead of '**palabra**'; wherefore '**palabras**' and not '**unas palabras**'? What reasons can there be for dropping the indefinite article and letting the plural creep in? There's obviously nothing wrong with the English title, nor is there anything intrinsically untranslatable in 'a' and 'word'; nor is it ungrammatical or even awkward Spanish to say '**Unas palabras de bienvenida**'. There are, it is true, no linguistic reasons, none whatsoever. But, as it happens --we explain-- in that situation Spanish simply **prefers** the undefined plural; that's all. Why? Well, we could, in truth, say '**unas palabras**', but it would be slightly less formal; as for the plural... Because. Those are what J.-P. Vinay calls SERVITUDES.9/ And '**Unas palabras de bienvenida**' in that specific situation ('title of the Secretary-General's introduction to a U.N. brochure depicting the Organisation') doesn't **sound** right, it runs contrary to USE. This explanation equips the students with a general principle they can apply for the rest of their lives; whereas invoking the 'genius' of the language won't do the trick.

But that was a rather simple case; the changes required were linguistically minimal. What happens, for instance, with this notice: 'NO SMOKING'? As we all know, it becomes '**PROHIBIDO FUMAR**'. The negative "monosemic" adverb has turned into a full-fledged past participle of a definitely "polysemic" verb. Or, further still, take this title from an ad for welding-goggles I had the privilege of being trusted with: 'The Glasses that Won't Make a Spectacle of Yourself' ('glass' again!), which I chose to render as '**Las gafas protectoras elegantes**'. Here, the only remaining linguistic connection lies in '**gafas**'. I had to choose a "name" 10/ for the object that would be readily understood by U.S. Hispanics and throughout the Spanish-speaking world. If the ad had been meant for the Argentine public, I could have safely used '**antiparras**' or '**anteojos**' (the former would not have been understood by many U.S. Hispanics, the latter is a dialectal use in the River Plate). I finally decided to put '**gafas**' (which would make an Argentinian or Uruguayan cringe, but not run away). The play on words was most decidedly untranslatable. I couldn't find one in Spanish (nor did the meager compensation make it worth my while - and **that too** is a formant of the situation!). So I chose

to convey the same SENSE ('the glasses don't look at all like goggles') as laconically and effectively as Spanish and my talent (yet another component of the situation) would allow me. The '**elegantes**' I thought of injecting, needed to make clear that those specific '**gafas**' were otherwise expected not to be very comely, necessitated an extra marker to distinguish them from regular 'glasses'. And thus '**protectoras**' was caboosed in. None of the choices was "linguistically" motivated by the English text; all of them were imposed or at least suggested by the situation: what my client expected (perhaps even unbeknownst to him!) was, in fact, not a translation of 'The Glasses That Won't Make a Spectacle of Yourself' but an effective slogan for a Spanish ad addressed to Hispanics in the U.S. and possibly abroad.

These admittedly extreme cases have been selected to make and illustrate a crucial point: the situation will always be there as supreme criterion and point of reference, **governing** every choice, at least in the long run. Now we can safely bring in examples closer to our everyday experience. Take the same situation: A man is carrying a folder under his arm; suddenly a piece of paper slides out of the folder and flies down to the ground. The situation is witnessed by a Spanish speaker and an English speaker. They both rush up to the man; one of them says: '**Se le cayó un papel**,' the other: 'You dropped a piece of paper.' Does the English speaker actually believe the man meant to let the paper drop, as opposed to the Spanish speaker who apparently thinks he didn't realise? Not at all. The perception is the same, but the linguistic framing is not. In English "that's the way you say it". Take one step further. The witness is bilingual; if he addresses the man in English, he'll frame his message one way, if in Spanish - the other way; but he doesn't have to "think" differently, just frame differently. The mark of the good translator is that his framing will be idiomatic, expected from a TL user. His translation will sound --or read-- like an original, or, as Peter Newmark puts it even better, naturally. He would rather be caught dead than have the English version go 'A paper fell off from you'! (Here we could point out that '**Dejó caer un papel**,' although somewhat obsequious, would not be outright ridiculous. Translation, let us always remind our students, is always unidirectional, and what may be wrong or right from language A to language B may not be so the opposite way: Translating '**usted**' as 'you' can be said to be usually right, but not the reverse.)

The distinction between meaning and sense, on the one hand, and context and situation, on the other, is far from established, at least terminologically. Many authors don't differentiate the concepts while others do, but without quite getting around to naming them; I believe it is of the essence to do so with our students from the very beginning. Meaning and context are linguistic, sense and situation are not. The context may go a long way to clarify meaning and specify sense, but then it may not. The situation, on the other hand, needs no further instances (there

are, in fact, none, since everything surrounding the text is, by definition, part of the situation; what are footnotes, after all, but additional information about the situation without which the reader of the translation --or, for that matter, of the original-- may be unable to make out sense?). The situation --if duly accessible-- will tell us everything we need or want to know about the text, its sender, set-up and intended audience, and also about our eventual readers; it will indicate to us how to go about our translation, it will answer all questions of style, it'll undo all unintentional ambiguities as well as highlight those which are there on purpose. It will go even further, beyond the author's intention into his unconscious, and ours, and our readers'. Not that we --and much less our students-- shall ever need to... And yet who knows?

7) FUNCTION AND OTHER FORMANTS

Now that we have placed both text and context firmly within the situation, we can focus on an aspect that has been implicit all through our reasoning without being explicitly mentioned; a term many a reader has surely been missing all these pages: let us bring in the concept of FUNCTION. I left it in abeyance deliberately, because, to my mind, FUNCTION has at times tended to displace SITUATION, whereas it is --again, by definition-- just one of the latter's formants, albeit invariably an essential one. When referring to the situation in connection with our '**gafas**' ad, the aspect we highlighted was in fact FUNCTION; it must be remembered, nevertheless, that we did indeed stop by another key formant - the emolument. Moolah may not be considered a formant lofty enough to take up residence in a paper such as this one, but it most definitely participates in the translation situation; in very much the same way it may have taken part in the situation of the original. Be that as it may, the key notion to be retained at this stage is that the "situation" may span centuries and reach across cultures; and that in our case it is most distinctly dismembered into two separate though overlapping sets of formants, one being the situation of the original (both at the time of its creation and at the moment of its translation) and that of the translation, performed by a different author (even if it happens to be the same person), in different circumstances, for a different audience, and for different reasons.11/ (Translators of Hesiod and Homer, on the one hand, do not strive to convert readers to Greek polytheism, they won't bother or wish to adapt the text to their readers' sensitivities or expectations; they will, in Ortega y Gasset's words,12/ choose bringing their readers to the text. On the other hand, some translators of the Bible endeavour to help evangelisation, wherefore audience response becomes a paramount formant demanding a radically new approach to the task; while, with a somewhat different motivation but a similar purpose, translators of welding-goggles ads hope to help them sell, lest they should lose the client: both must bring the text to their readers.)

* * *

CONCLUSION

To sum up, then, we started off by de-mystifying words; next we devalued context; lastly, we dethroned the original. Now texts themselves have been taken down a couple of notches. What we've been trying to do is to deverbalise the original, to pull our students away from printed letters; we have grabbed them by the collar and forced them to spread their wings and fly over the endless expanse of the situation, in whose midst glides the text, its sails of meaning at varying degrees from the winds of sense, its author a better or a worse mariner, its build making it more or less seaworthy. Of course we know, and we will duly remind them in due time, that our job remains to begin with a text in the SL and end up with another one in the TL; our task is **definitely** and **fundamentally** linguistic. But unless we wean them from words --and, I insist, it has to be done right away and most vehemently-- it will take them a very long time to become good translators, and many of them won't ever make it.

So what we had taught our students in class one was a simplified model of translation. We have now refined it a bit. We should let them know that, as they progress toward the mastery of their craft, further refinements are in store. Some will come from us, some from other teachers or colleagues, some from themselves. Via differentiating **LANGUE** and **PAROLE** we have introduced the capital distinction between MEANING and SENSE, thus paving the way to the concepts of SITUATION and its FORMANTS, with particular attention to FUNCTION; we have also stressed the differences in the way people and languages FRAME the same situations. In our first class we distinguished form from meaning, meaning we then de-constructed into semes; now we have exited meaning and with it the linguistic and forayed into sense; sense we have learnt to determine on the basis of the situation. The situation itself has been de-constructed pretty much like meaning. We can view it as a series of concentric circles or spheres reaching away from the text well down into the culture itself. We have examined the way the situation was framed into the original via the particular FREEDOMS and SERVITUDES of the SL through the specific text competence, intention and sensibility of the sender. Then we tried to come up with a text built up by means of the freedoms and servitudes of the TL, that would be as close an equivalent framing of the same situation by someone as close to the sender as can possibly be conjured up. Except it is not exactly the same situation, since we are not the original sender, nor are our audience the original targets, nor is it quite the same place or time. Although we have sought equivalences at levels below that of the whole text, only textual equivalence as a whole counts. In order to be finally accepted, every single aspect of our translation demands a global perspective from the standpoint of the total text. Our text-producing ability is thus tested to the utmost. We have to

know our TL inside out, have a reasonable grasp of the subject-matter in hand, and resort to any piece of evidence, any clue, to fill in the gaps and missing links.

It is definitely complicated, devious and difficult. There are so many things to be learnt and books to be read; so much knowledge to be assimilated, incorporated and systematised! But then physicians find themselves in the same predicament. Translation is not a bit easier. The only difference is there's no malpractice --yet-- for incompetent translators; and that's what allows people to thrive around us who think that because they abuse two languages they can translate between them. We are surrounded by witch doctors and charlatans. It is up to us, "pedagotrads",13/ to form competent and responsible language professionals; it is professional organisations that help separate the wheat from the chaff (or is it the straw from the grain?).

NOTES:

1/ Unfortunately, he refuses to cross the door into sense.

2/ With the exception of Schweizer, García Yebra and Lvovskaja, none of the authors listed in the bibliography distinguish between 'meaning' and 'sense' as well as between 'context' and situation. Roberts, Seleskovitch and Spilka make the first distinction but not the second; Barjudarov and Gregory just the latter one. Larson, Nida and Taber, Mounin and Vázquez Ayora make neither, while Newmark explicitly refuses to. Roberts provides also a very interesting analysis of the way different scholars have used 'meaning', 'sense' and 'context'. Both term and concept of 'function' are more widely recognised, discussed and used in the practice as well as in the theory of translation. Excellent analyses of the role of the situation can be found, among others, in Barjudarov, Komissarov, Schweizer, Gile, Lvovskaja, Neubert, Kussmaul, Mossop, and Nida.

3/ As Catford next points out, "SL and TL texts are translation equivalents when they are interchangeable in the same situation." (p. 35)

4/ A term --and concept-- pilfered from Neubert, pp. 36 and foll.

5/ See B. Mossop, p. 245, a seminal, thought-provoking piece I cannot recommend too strongly; and also M. García Landa's splendid article.

6/ The term I borrow from Lvovskaja's formidable book.

7/ Neubert, pp. 65 and foll. An excellent insight into this crucial factor, as well as into many others; a book that simply must be read!

8/ See Vinay's insightful piece.

9/ We could, perhaps, speak here about SEMASIOLOGY as opposed to ONOMASIOLOGY; i.e. comprehending what is named and naming what has been comprehended. See, for instance, Wills and García Yebra.

10/ "Textual processes are always 'situated'... Situationality stands for the socio-cultural context in its space-time realization... The concrete situation is like the tip of the iceberg. It is a projection of general and particular communicative habits of the [SL] (and in translation also of the [TL]) communities. Whatever is meant to be spoken or written, to further whatever goal, and whatever is comprehended in whatever interest, must pass through a 'situational channel'. Taking the prevailing situational factors into account turns out to be of paramount importance for the solution of the problem of translation. It seems extremely simplistic but it is nevertheless true to say that situationality guarantees translatability." Neubert (again!) pp. 65-67.

11/ Ortega y Gasset's article "Miseria y esplendor de la traducción" has become a staple, outmoded and unscientific as it is, because of this wonderful insight into the two Shleiermacherian "directions" of translation. The concepts have been excellently explained and baptised by P. Newmark as communicative and semantic translation.

12/ J.-C. Gémar defines us in the most flattering terms: **"Le personnage clé autour duquel s'articulent désormais les lignes de force de la théorie générale de la traduction... Mi-théoriciens mi-praticiens, les pédagotrads s'apparentent peut-être davantage aux didacticiens en ce sens qu'ils réfléchissent, à partir des conditions concrètes de leur expérience de traducteur, à la meilleure façon d'aborder les problèmes théoriques que pose la traduction et avancent des formules, des techniques et des méthodes pour la résoudre"**, pp. 324 and 328. And V. García Yebra rounds it up: **"...Un buen maestro se diferencia de un simple práctico en que no sólo 'hace', sino que 'sabe el camino', conoce el método, para 'hacer bien' lo que hace. Este saber, este conocimiento del camino, de las normas que rigen el arte de traducir, es justamente la 'theoria', que es 'visión' o 'contemplación'..."**, pp. 16-17.

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